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## EDITORIAL NOTES

### NEW YEAR—NEW OPPORTUNITIES.

With its three hundred and sixty-five clean, unmarked pages, a new year has come to us to use or abuse; to write things upon them that will endure and be of benefit to the people, to the profession of which we are humble units, to the communities in which we severally live and work and have our influence; or to be left blank, soiled, scrawled upon or smudged. There is enough to do, God knows, in the way of helping ourselves and of helping the people whose needs and ills and sufferings we tend; and we must not forget that in helping ourselves to a better living, to a fuller life, we are helping the people. A physician poor in purse is handicapped to the extent that he cannot provide himself with the proper things of knowledge or material equipment with which to give the best that is in him to his patients. This we should not fail to recognize or to make our patients understand, as we have opportunity from time to time. There is nothing in the world more dangerous than a cheap lawyer except a cheap doctor. Let the new year see you follow more accurate and careful business methods in dealing with the business side of your work; no one respects the man he can defraud or cheapen, and your patients will respect you more for it. Do not let your accounts run for a year or two and then try to collect what you can; send out your bills promptly and after a year of moderate effort to collect, see that the debtor is forced to pay, if he is in a position to do so. Orderliness in business methods will have a beneficial effect upon your professional work, for it will induce more orderly thinking. Also, it will

provide you with more income with which to get books and journals and instruments, or enable you to travel and visit other physicians and see how their work compares with your own; where you fall short and where you go ahead. Above all, do not forget to do your own best work for the benefit of your own county medical society; it will help you and will help every member of the profession and will stimulate a greater respect for the entire profession in your community. Nothing hurts us all so much as rows amongst medical men themselves. A fight between two physicians not only hurts them both, no matter which one is in the right, but it hurts the whole medical profession by belittling its members in the eyes of the community. In every county where you find a good, active, well-knit county medical society, there you will find the medical profession looked up to and respected. There is plenty to be written on these clean pages of this year's new book; will you write something worth while?

### UNION HEALTH DEPARTMENTS.

All over the country cities are engaged in becoming acquainted with themselves by means of efficiency surveys. These surveys have grown out of the perfectly natural desire of the taxpayer to know how his money is being spent, and whether he is getting value received. Wherever these surveys have been instituted, the health department is primarily the one which shows marked weakness in comparison to the other departments of administration. The reason of this is evident. As long as city councils and county boards of supervisors have the impression that the chief functions of a health department are limited to the placarding and fumigation of habitations after certain diseases, and the investigation and removal of the causes of bad smells, so long will the appropriations for health work continue to be inadequate.

The medical profession is largely to blame for this impression. It needs a vision far beyond that of the man trained in curative medicine, to see the intense broad social significance of preventive medicine. Workers for social betterment have long had this vision and forced a tardy recognition on the medical profession. There are many phases of the subject that are slowly slipping from us due to our Rip Van Winkle sleep of a generation past. At the Summer Session of the University of California there was a psychological clinic running without an M. D. degree on the instructing staff. This is only an example of how the broad social preventive fields have escaped our tillage, and their fruits will be garnered by others than the sons of Aesculapius.

There are many reasons why the medical man does not, *ipso facto*, make a good health officer. He is, it is true, good raw material, but he needs much training. First of all, he must be unhampered by a private practice; secondly, he must have the ability to view mankind in the mass rather than as individuals; and finally he must be trained to the new profession. Within the

last few years, non-medical men, trained at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology under Sedgwick, have been making good as health officers in various parts of the country. Now through affiliation with Harvard University in the new School for Health Officers, the Institute will be able to further broaden the viewpoint of its students. These M. I. T. men have done well as health officers because they have been employed on a "full time" basis. Full time may not mean that all of a man's working day is given to the health department, but it does mean that all his time is given to public service, and that the exactions of a private practice can never crowd aside the public welfare.

It is apparent that the small city cannot afford to pay for the services of the "full time" trained health officer. In California we can meet the situation exactly as the educational authorities have done in the formation of union high schools. There can be no objection to the formation of union health districts within the counties. The health officers appointed under this plan would be county deputies for their several districts, as well as health officers for one or more cities within the district. The best feature of this plan is that it could be carried out without another act of legislature.

J. N. F.

#### CIVIL SERVICE AND PUBLIC HEALTH.

When a progressive city sets out to place its administrative offices on a basis of efficiency, the health office is only too often overlooked. It is, therefore, very gratifying to find the City of Oakland reorganizing its health department and placing at its head a Health Director chosen under civil service regulations. It indeed marks a new epoch in the public health work of a city when the administration demands that health officials shall give their entire time to the work and shall be specialists in preventive medicine. When Oakland's plan was first announced the skeptics said, "The salary offered will not hire an able man unless he has the privilege of practicing medicine at the same time," and "How can a Civil Service Commission made up of lawyers and business men choose a Health Director?" The number of applicants from distant parts of the United States showed that there are plenty of men who are eager for public service in preventive medicine even if salaried positions do not offer the financial possibilities of surgery or curative medicine. The Civil Service Commission recognized its limitations better than did the skeptics and appointed an advisory committee to draw up questions, mark answers, and pass upon experience and personal qualifications. This committee consisted of the Secretary of the State Board of Health, the Professor of Sanitary Engineering in the University of California, the Health Officer of Oakland, an Oakland physician, and the Director of the State Hygienic Laboratory. These men were glad to help place the

choice of health officials on a basis of executive ability and expert knowledge: The United States Public Health Service assisted by holding the examination in the eastern states and forwarding the papers.

The Director has the health of a splendid city in his charge and we wish him every success. Chosen on merit, he has our confidence, and we look to him for a constructive and efficient public health administration for Oakland. W. A. S.

#### PUBLIC HEALTH AND INTERFERENCE.

It seems a curious fatality to announce in a special public health number of the JOURNAL the fact that the Secretary of the State Board of Health has resigned his office because of the intolerable interference with his work by some petty-minded laymen who really have nothing to say about it but who have usurped the right to say how every dollar of the money spent by the Board of Health shall be expended. Were it not a matter of the greatest importance to the people of the state, it would be farcical in the extreme. Dr. Snow has for several years served the state as Secretary of the State Board of Health and has served it intelligently and faithfully and well; we certainly are sorry to see him obliged, by such petty and mutton-headed interference, to sever his connection with the health work of the state.

#### EMINENT MEDICAL AUTHORITY.

Most of us have laughed with *Life*. All of us have been disgusted with its malignant attacks on preventive medicine. But once in a while we have the chance to laugh at *Life*. On page 620 of the present volume is published a communication entitled "Rabies: An Exposé," signed by Charles E. Page, M. D., of Boston, which as a monumental mass of ignorant misinformation deserves more than passing attention. Naturally, after reading this stuff, the medical man would like to know the medical qualifications of the writer. The A. M. A. Directory contains the following record:

Page, Chas. E. (b.1840) -N.Y.\* (Y of P) 120 Tremont St., 10-3. We can forgive much ignorance to a man aged 73 who holds his license by virtue of years of practice, and whose medical school or graduation cannot be determined. His opinion ought to be about as valuable, and his scientific information about as accurate as that of the ordinary newspaper reporter at twenty per. In this instance, however, it happens that the newspaper information regarding the isolation of the rabies organism is correct, and the "doctor" is mistaken.

Negri, in 1903, discovered the bodies which bear his name, in the brains of rabid animals. Noguchi, in 1913, has succeeded in isolating these same bodies, or growing them on artificial media outside the animal brains. A little more attention to microbiology in "Dr." Page's reading would have showed him that there was nothing inconsistent in the newspaper statement. Your